



ISLINGTON

CHILDREN'S SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

2 February 2016

SECOND DESPATCH

Please find enclosed the following items:

Item 1	Alternative Provision: Witness Evidence	1 - 24
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BRIEFING NOTE No.1

SID FOCUS: THE REASONS WHY CHILDREN ARE IN AP

The profile of AP students and their outcomes: referrals and attendance

1. Referring schools and reasons for referral

- 1.1 Table 1 shows the numbers of referrals from other pupil support services such as Admissions and different schools both in and out of Islington. The figures count those on roll and referrals together.

Table 1: Referral numbers, by school and other agencies, 2012 - 2016

Referring school or agency	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	TOTAL
School					
Central Foundation Boys' School	17	8	10	10	45
Chalcot	1				1
Elizabeth Garrett Anderson	9	14	16	6	45
Elthorne	1	1			2
Highbury Fields	6	3	1	3	13
Highbury Grove	22	18	18	15	73
Highgate Wood				1	1
Holloway	28	22	21	20	91
Islington Arts and Media	20	16	10	11	57
Maria Fidelis				1	1
Mount Carmel	13	8	13	8	42
New River College	7	8	13	11	39
Samuel Rhodes	1	1			2
St Mary Magdalene Academy	22	9	10	15	56
St Aloysius	14	14	19	11	58
Other referrers					
Admissions Service (LBI)	19	20	21	7	67
Securing Education Board	7	3		1	11
Special Educational Needs (LBI)	4	4			8
Children Missing Education Service (LBI)	5	4	3	3	15
Virtual School for Looked After Children				1	1
TOTAL	196	153	155	124	628

- 1.2 Every local authority must have a Fair Access Protocol, agreed with the majority of its schools to ensure that outside the normal admissions round, unplaced children are allocated a suitable school place quickly (Paragraph 3.9 School Admissions Code 2014).
- 1.3 Fair Access Protocols must describe how the local authority will use provision to ensure that the needs of pupils who are not ready for mainstream schooling are met (Paragraph 3.9 School Admissions Code 2014).
- 1.4 The local authority must ensure that no school, including those with available places, is asked to take a disproportionate number of children who have been excluded from other schools, or who have challenging behaviour (Paragraph 3.9 School Admissions Code 2014).
- 1.5 The Secondary Securing Education Board (SSEB) oversees the arrangements for, and makes decisions about, the placement of **unplaced** pupils admitted under **Islington's Fair Access Protocol**.
- 1.6 In line with the requirements of the School Admissions Code, the SSEB considers the circumstances of individual pupils on a case by case basis in terms of:
- what is best for them;
 - whether they are ready for mainstream schooling;
 - which mainstream school will best meet their needs; and
 - in cases where mainstream is not considered suitable, what education provision will be put in place.
- 1.7 The SSEB makes a two part decision based on the evidence available:
- Does the application meet the criteria for admission under Islington's Fair Access Protocol?
 - Which provision is the most appropriate to meet the pupil's needs (e.g. mainstream school, alternative provision or Pupil Referral Unit)?
- 1.8 The SSEB only allocate Alternative Provision as a last resort. The table below provides a breakdown of allocations to Alternative Provision over a 3 year period as at 26/01/16, with only two of the 72 pupils admitted under Islington's Fair Access Protocol, allocated a place at Alternative Provision.

Table 2: Admissions to Alternative Provision via the Secondary Securing Education Board

Admissions to Alternative Provision via the Secondary Securing Education Board				
	#	#	#	#
Allocated education provision	COUNT 2013/14	COUNT 2014/15	COUNT 2015/16	3 YEAR COUNT
Alternative Provision	1	0	1	2
Pupil Referral Units	20	17	12	49
Schools	9	10	2	21
TOTALS	30	27	15	72

- 1.9 Table 3 details the reasons for referrals over the last two academic years. It should be noted that the Alternative Provision team started to record referral reasons two years ago as part of the self-evaluation process.

Table 3: Referral reasons, 2014 - 2016

	2014-15	2015-16
Behaviour	84	57
Behaviour, low attendance	6	13
Behaviour, low attendance, student/parent request	1	8
Behaviour, student/parent request	8	7
Safeguarding issue (can't be at school)	2	
Low attendance	6	4
Low attendance, student/parent request	10	7
Mental health issues	4	4
Student/parent request	34	24
Total	155	124

- 1.10 Table 4 shows that most of the AP cohort live in Islington and neighbouring boroughs.

Table 4: AP cohort, by local authority

Local authority	2014-15	2015-16
Islington	125	104
Hackney	14	6
Camden	6	6
Haringey	5	4
Barking and Dagenham	1	1
Enfield		1
Hertfordshire	1	
Tower Hamlets	1	1
Waltham Forest	1	
Westminster	1	1
Total	155	124

2. Attendance

- Many students that are referred to Alternative Provision are not meeting the government requirements of 95% attendance.
- Far too many students (40%) have an attendance percentage of less than 80%.
- Full time Access and Engagement Officer since June 2014 has helped to raise the attendance percentage in the 80-95% category.
- Within Alternative Provision, there is a culture of families knowing each other. Previously, the message within this group has been that there is no follow up on non-attendance. This is slowly starting to change and families are realising that warnings and fines will be issued and followed through.
- The Access and Engagement Officer carries out regular home visits and has built good relationships with families which is starting to have an impact on improving attendance.

Table 5: Attendance, by academic years 2014-15 and 2015-16

Academic Year	Month	Number of students	Attendance rate				Awaiting placement
			0-49%	50-79%	80-94%	95%-100%	
2014-15	Oct-14	129	14.5%	22.9%	26.7%	29.5%	9.2%
	Nov-14	134	17.1%	32.0%	23.8%	21.6%	5.2%
	Feb-15	145	22.7%	24.1%	27.5%	22.0%	3.4%
	Mar-15	151	24.5%	28.2%	30.4%	16.5%	3.9%
	Apr-15	152	24.3%	28.2%	31.5%	12.5%	3.5%
2015-16	Sep-15	106	12.2%	28.3%	18.8%	31.1%	9.4%
	Oct-15	107	17.7%	26.1%	33.6%	15.1%	6.5%
	Nov-15	108	21.2%	25.0%	32.4%	17.5%	2.7%
	Dec-15	115	23.4%	20.0%	36.5%	16.5%	3.5%
	Jan-16	123	18.6%	26.8%	34.1%	13.8%	6.5%

Case Studies

1. Child A (JB)

JB was a student at Holloway Secondary School; by the end of academic year 2014-2015 JB had achieved an overall attendance of 92.06%. JB was referred to Alternative Provision mainly for disruptive behaviour, inadequate classwork, homework and general defiance to teaching staff. There were incidents of verbal abuse towards staff and pupils. JB was also displaying aggressive behaviour towards others which brought in to question whether JB had become gang associated outside of school. Even though JB had a positive attendance rate he was not making progress in a number of subjects and lack of engagement or willingness to participate was having a negative impact on JB's potential to succeed in mainstream school.

Different measures were put in place by the school such as:

- JB behaviour was monitored, with weekly meetings with the pastoral team to develop strategies to improve JB's negative behaviours
- Informal mentoring sessions
- Tutor report cards

- Time out in the seclusion space where JB was supported with behaviour and life choices
- Referrals made to TYS & IFIT who are currently working with family. However the engagement with the family has been very poor and limited

After the school had exhausted all options of support it was decided that JB would benefit from a new start on Alternative Provision hoping that this move would have a positive effect on JB's learning process.

In September 2015 JB enrolled at the Building Craft College, by mid-September JB's attendance rate was 71.4% however there were increasing concerns around JB being associated with local gangs as JB was current on a 9 month YRO for possession of a knife which he received in the summer holidays.

Actions taken by Access and Engagement Officer:

- Attendance concern letters sent home
- Unannounced home visits completed on several occasions but no response
- Professional meetings attended at Provision but JB has failed to attend all of these
- One to one session with JB
- Post 16 Progression Advisor asked to help, she has met with JB but he has refused to engage
- Court warning letter sent
- TAF meeting attended JB still refusing to attend

At present JB's attendance rate is 25.2%

2. Child B (MF)

MF was a student at Mount Carmel School for Girls from Year 7. Halfway through Year 9 MF stopped attending school despite EWS action taken against mum and support put in place by the school to help increase the attendance. By the end of Year 10 MF had attendance rate of 16.4% and had completely stopped attending school. This decision seemed to be supported by her mum. There were no issues with MF's behaviour in school, just her poor attendance rate. There were some concerns with behaviour outside school and it was questioned whether MF was involved with gangs within the housing estate where she lived.

MF lived with her mum and a younger niece and nephew who were under a child protection plan for neglect.

As MF was now a school refuser, a referral to Alternative Provision was made. MF was accepted onto a Childcare course at City and Islington College. However although MF had picked the course she decided that this was not an area she was interested in. Attendance to this course was very poor and at the end of Year 10 MF had only achieved 38.2% attendance.

Actions taken by Access and Engagement Officer:

- Attendance concern letter sent
- Office invite sent – family did not attend on a number of occasions
- Unannounced home visit met with family

- Court warning letter sent as attendance did not improve
- From February 2015 – May 2015 met with mum and MF several times attendance discussed trust built up
- June 2015 invited to Options Evening picked BSix Sixth Form College
- June 2015 accompanied MF to her interview
- July 2015 MF attended some taster sessions at BSix
- September 2015 MF started Hair and Beauty course at BSix
- Currently MF has a 90% attendance rate

In order to encourage the positive attendance to continue the Alternative Provision team has sent certificates and rewards to MF.

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Contributors: Gabriella di-Sciullo, Head of Admissions and Children Out of School Service, Children's Services



BRIEFING NOTE No. 2

SID FOCUS: THE LOCAL AP ARRANGEMENTS

The role of schools

- There is currently no set requirement on what schools should do to try and support a student to remain in mainstream education. However, all schools need to demonstrate that they have tried a variety of techniques.
- Students are referred at different stages of support based on the reason for a referral.
- If a student takes a weapon or drugs into school and has in the past shown no behaviour issues the school may make an immediate referral to AP rather than a permanent exclusion. In these cases support in school may not have been required as the student showed no signs of need.
- Different schools work with students in different ways.
- Some of the support offered is as follows:
 - Referrals to other services – IFIT, CAHMS, Family First, Think Forward
 - Learning mentor
 - 1-1 mentoring with form tutor or Head of Year
 - Small group work
 - Seclusion
 - Inclusion
 - Parent Meetings
 - Reports – Tutor, Head of Year, Senior Leader
 - Anger management
 - Aspire programme
 - Progress Park – now closed

Schools have to complete and send the Information Passport before a referral is accepted. See below for a sample Information Passport. Please note that some of the information has been removed or pseudonyms used due to data protection.

SAMPLE INFORMATION PASSPORT

Alternative Provision Referral Process

The following is a list of guidelines for a school to refer a student to Alternative Provision.

1. The referring nominated person at the school is to send All Year 10 and 11 referrals to the AP team.
2. Students must go through all three stages outlined in this form. If stage 1 and 2 are missed then the school must provide a reasonable explanation for this.
3. Referrers must set targets that they expect a student to attain. These should be marked short, medium or long.
4. No Year 11 can be referred after the October half term. Any Year 11 referred after this deadline will remain on their school roll and not transfer to the AP roll – The school and the AP team will however monitor student progress, attendance, behaviour and any other personal issues.
5. Year 10 students can be referred throughout the academic year.
6. A print out of the named student behaviour report must be included in this pack.

(Please tick the forms you have included)

Stage 1 Form ☒

Baseline Information ☒

Stage 2 Form ☒

Information Passport ☒

Behaviour Report ☒

Risk Assessment ☒

Write below your reasons for any of the above forms to not be included.

All forms complete

The AP team may return forms if not enough information on the student is included.

Stage 1 – School Intervention

Name of School: School A

Name of Student: G Tutor Group: 10F

Attendance: 85% Punctuality: 80%

Names of those present at Stage 1 Meeting

School A's Deputy Head of Year
School A's Headteacher
G (student)
G's mother
G's father
EWO

List below the needs of the student

Learning

.....is a high achiever when she is focused and should be achieving A-C GCSE's in all subjects. She is a mature and able student.

She has been able to progress through hard work, and this has helped her to achieve a respectable grade in many of her subjects.

..... could do far better if she was committed to her school and studies she needs to be focused and use all her energy in trying to understand what is being taught.

I am sure ifputs her mind to it she can reach her true potential, as this has been reflected by her progress so far.

She needs to develop her ability to be able to work independently in the classroom and not get distracted by others, as this makes G lose that sense of direction and purpose.

Behaviour

..... has 80% attendance so far this year; she is punctual most of the time and smartly dressed.has already received a significant amount of achievement points and a few concerns being raised about her attitude towards being in school. wants and deserves to do well but needs to settle and commit to an educational establishment.

She clearly has the capacity to apply herself to her studies, enabling her to make rapid progress. As the year progresses it would be good to see her demonstrate a mature and studious approach to all of her studies, especially as the tasks become more challenging. There are some issues with lack of focus and motivation towards subjects.

List below the current support that is in place

..... will go and talk to pupil support when she feels she needs to talk to an adult about things outside of school for guidance.

Actions that the school will put into place for the student

School A will continue to support through negotiation and collaboration
There has also been various school projects that has been a part of such as small group work for disaffected girls.

Actions that the parent/carer will put into place for the student

Parent had small punishments at home i.e. no TV and so on but student can play mom against dad as they are not living together and relationship with her mother can be rocky and uncomfortable.lives with her father.

What will the student do to support this plan? List their tasks or actions.

..... has said she would engage more in her subjects if the school looked into the possibility of supporting her on AP.
This has been agreed as a motivation strategy in keeping the student in education.
.....has promised to engage by attending school and being on time.

Date of Stage 2 review meeting (it is suggested that the review takes place within 6-8 weeks after the Stage 1 meeting): ***April 2015**

I am willing to work with the school to improve my child's learning or behaviour. I am aware that if my child makes little or no progress that they may be referred to Alternative Provision as a positive pathway in order to support their needs.

Parental Signature: **Signed document by parent in school file**

Date: 03/04/15

Stage 2 – School Intervention

Name of School: School A

Name of Student: Tutor Group: 10F

Names of those present at Stage 2 Meeting

School A's Deputy Head Of Year

G (student)

G's father

EWO (EWO)

Using the Stage 1 form, behaviour reports, teacher/academic reports discuss student progress before answering the question below.

List evidence provided

Little progress made.

Has the student made satisfactory progress: NO
(if no complete the sections below)

List the concerns that are preventing student progress

Continued issues with attendance and wanting to leave school for college

Identify the reasons why a move to Alternative Provision would be a positive route for this student

To further her career aspirations,
Re-engagement into education through the alternative educational provision,
This is seen as a positive route for this student in moving forward as the student feels she has out grown her peers and the school and wants to move on.

Does the student have a statement: No

Date of next Annual Review: N/A

List the support that the student requires in order to meet the statement and how this will be monitored

N/A

I have understood that the school has tried to work with my child's learning or behaviour needs. I am now willing for my child to be referred to and then attend an Alternative Educational Provision.

Parental Signature: Signed document by parent in school file

Date: 23/04/15

Copies of both forms should be sent to the Parent and Head of Alternative Provision. Schools should keep a copy for their own records.

Islington Information Passport (KS4)

Stage 3 – School Referral

To be completed by the school.

Alternative Provision Provider: Westminster Kingsway College

Contact Name: Ms Amanda Keer

Number & E-mail:

UPN: **D.O.B:**

Year Group: 10F **Ethnicity:** Wht-Eng

First Name: **Surname:**

Parents Name:

Address:

Contact Numbers:

KS2 Results

ENG	MA	SC	ICT

KS3 Results

ENG	MA	SC	ICT
4A	5B	4A	5C

Reading Age _____ **Date of Test** _____

Spelling Age _____ **Date of Test** _____

	YES	NO
G&T		N
EAL		N
FSM		N
CAF		N

Attendance %: 80%

Punctuality % : 85%

SEN Register: No

If yes please state stage and where the student will need support.

N/A

Behaviour (issues if any) **You MUST include the behaviour report for the student.**

When G is focused she can show a good understanding.
Her poor attendance has been her biggest barrier to progression as you cannot learn if you are not in class. When she is in her attitude is hit and miss, she can become distracted by lack of interest in school and as a result her written work does not reflect her true ability.

Professional Network

	Yes/No	Name	Contact Number or e-mail
School Mentor	N		
Connexions	N		
Social Worker	N		
EWO	Y	[name]	[email]
YOS	N		
Key Worker	N		
CAF Lead Professional	N		

You must write a minimum of three targets that the student should aim for whilst on Alternative Provision. These targets should be marked short, medium or long in the following areas:

Academic Targets

1. To develop a career path in her preferred field of work. (L)
2. To progress in a course at the highest level. (L)
3. To ensure you sit your Maths, English and Science GCSE. (S)

Personal and Social Development Targets

1. To recognise that attending any educational establishment is for one self to progress as you deserve a good education.
2. A chance to show people how considerate and insightful you are.
3. To develop your self-worth and commitment to your studies.

Students Strengths and Areas for Development

<u>Strengths</u>	<u>Areas for Development</u>
Considerate. Mature. Highly intelligent. Thoughtful. Loyal friend Reflective Calm nature Carer Leader	A little too laidback. Needs more motivation toward her education. Long term solutions can be slow to be put into action. A sense of direction,

Strategies for success

Include strategies which have proved effective in addressing the student's needs.

<p>Talk to like a young adult, mature female. This will also cause actions of reflection from</p> <p>To let sit quietly and calm and approach the issue when she is less stressed</p> <p>Clear, Calm instructions</p>

Medical

Complete the box below listing the medical needs of the student and any medication they might be taking or if they are known to CAMHS.

<p>None recorded</p>

Has the parent been made aware of the referral? Yes

Name of School: School A

Name of staff making the referral: School A's Deputy Head of Year

Contact details: [tel number and extension] / DeputyHeadOfYear@SchoolA

Signature: Deputy Head of Year

Date: 23rd April 2015

Name: Gender: Female Ethnicity: Wht Eng	DOB: School: SCHOOL A Year Group:10F UPN:	Provision Westminster Kingsway College
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English

..... is a capable student. She has engaged in preparing for her i.G.C.S.E exam and ensured she has finished all tasks to the best of her ability. is can be focused and listens intently. She is consistently polite and encourages other students to work hard. She contributes to discussions and has been reading 'To Kill A Mockingbird' and the Language exam passages with enthusiasm. provides original ideas to tasks and shows great understanding of the work set.

Targets:

..... must ask 'why' and 'what-if' questions to develop her high-order thinking skills.

Keep asking for clarification if get confused

At the last formal assessment achieved a grade C. G's target for the end of Year 10 is C leading to a grade B by the end of Year 11. This assumes regular attendance and completion of class work and homework.

Mathematics

..... made a reasonably good start in mathematics this year. Her behaviour in class is generally good, but sometimes she allows herself to become distracted or can distract others. It is important that she addresses this throughout the year. She arrives to lessons promptly and is ready to work after an initial prompt. completes excellent work at times, but her presentation needs to improve. Her homework is usually completed; an increased level of effort and independent work will help her to achieve her target grade and possibly exceed it.

Targets:

..... achieved a grade D at the last assessment point; I believe that she should achieve her minimum target of C by the end of Year 10. To improve and secure the possibility of exceeding this target, should focus on the following topics: negative indices and standard form; simple and compound interest; multiplication and division with decimals; and writing numbers as products of prime factors.

Self Esteem

Low

Attitude to Learning

Very good when focused

Other Key point or observation

Will over dramatize situations if allowed

BEHAVIOUR MANAGEMENT PLAN
RISK INDICATOR CHECKLIST

Name:	D.O.B. :
Medical/Emotional considerations:	
School: SCHOOL A	
UPN:	

1. RISK ASSESSMENT – HISTORY

2. BEHAVIOUR, Health & Safety RISKS

Tick appropriate box for each question year

Tick any risk behaviours in past

History of violence

None

One incident

Two incidents

Three incidents

More than three incidents

Threats of violence

Most serious harm caused

None

Minor injury

Serious/major injury

History of suicide attempts

None

One

Two-Three

More than three

History of severe neglect (ever)

No

Yes

History of arson (ever)

No

Yes

Threats

History of containment (ever)

Special Hospital

☒ Accidental harm at home (e.g. falling, careless, climbing) ☒

☐ Lack of awareness of danger ☐

☐ Accidental harm outside the home (e.g. wandering into the road) ☐

☒ Throwing of objects to cause harm ☐

☐ Biting ☐

☐ Non-compliance with medication ☐

☐ Incidents involving the police ☐

☐ Risk of abuse from others ☐

☐ Running away from home/school ☒

☐ Self-Harm (e.g. Cutting) ☐

☒ Other self-harming behaviours (e.g. punching walls, head butting walls, punching self) ☐

☐ Use of weapon/object as weapon to cause harm ☐

☐ Sexual assault (including touching/exposure) ☐

Secure Unit	<input type="checkbox"/>	Violence to family	<input type="checkbox"/>
Prison	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Locked Ward	<input type="checkbox"/>	Violence to staff	<input type="checkbox"/>
Detained at a Police Station	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Detained under MHA 1983	<input type="checkbox"/>	Violence to other students	<input type="checkbox"/>
Detained under Section 136	<input type="checkbox"/>		
None	<input type="checkbox"/>	Violence to general public	<input type="checkbox"/>
History of dropping out of contact with mental health services		Unsafe use of equipment, machine tools etc.	<input type="checkbox"/>
No	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other: Verbal Abuse, threatening language.....	<input type="checkbox"/>

STUDENT RISK ASSESSMENT / BEHAVIOUR MANAGEMENT PLAN

Triggers:					
•					
Specific Hazardous Behaviours:		Description/Examples		Risk: Low <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Medium <input type="checkbox"/> High <input type="checkbox"/>	
• Verbal abuse		Screaming and shouting, threatening others		Risk: Low <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Medium <input type="checkbox"/> High <input type="checkbox"/>	
• Physical violence		Fighting		Risk: Low <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Medium <input type="checkbox"/> High <input type="checkbox"/>	
Successful Strategies to manage risks:					
•					
De-escalation/Intervention:					
	Try	Avoid		Try	Avoid
Clear Instructions	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Hold (wrap/single elbow/double elbow/figure of four)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Verbal Advice & support	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Take up time	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Negotiation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Withdrawal offered	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Limited Choices	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Withdrawal directed	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Distraction	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Transfer adult	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Diversion	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Consequences re-enforced	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reassurance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Humour	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Planned Ignoring	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Success reminders	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Positive Touch	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other (see below):	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Friendly hold	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other (see below):	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Others:					

<div style="height: 150px; width: 100%;"></div>

Recording and Notifications Required:			
Parents/Carers/Staff	<input type="checkbox"/>	CAMHS	<input type="checkbox"/>
Placing authority	<input type="checkbox"/>	YOT/Police	<input type="checkbox"/>
Social Worker/Social Services	<input type="checkbox"/>	G.P.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Educational Psychologist	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other: Alternative Provider			

Name: School A's Deputy Head of Year	Signature: <div style="height: 30px; width: 100%;"></div> [signed]	Date: 24/04/2015
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Children's Services Scrutiny Committee

Scrutiny Review: Alternative Provision

Visit to Council Offices: 18 January 2016

On 18 January 2016, members of the Children's Services Scrutiny Committee visited the council offices at 222 Upper Street to meet officers working in the Alternative Provision service.

Members discussed the work of the service with Gabby Grodentz, Head of Alternative Provision, and Sally Dahl, Coordinator of Alternative Provision.

The visit was attended by Councillors Kaya Comer-Schwartz, Nick Wayne and Michelline Safe Ngongo; James Stephenson, the Secondary Parent Governor Representative; and a representatives from Children's Services and Democratic Services.

During the visit the following main points were made:

- The Alternative Provision service was a small team comprised of two members of staff. It was explained that Sally Dahl dealt with the operational side of the service, however contributed to the more strategic elements, which were primarily handled by Gabby Grodentz. Sally advised that her typical day may involve attending a child protection meeting, a meeting at a college, and a meeting with IFIT. Sally also regularly provided schools with updates on the progress of their pupils.
- Due to the small size of the team, work in the Alternative Provision service was described as "bitty", with officers having to carry out a wide range of tasks. Officers worked with pupils, parents, schools and other services such as youth offending and early intervention services on a daily basis.
- Both Sally and Gabby contributed to the quality assessment of providers.
- As a small service, officers had to be versatile and willing to develop new skills. One particular challenge for the service had been working with SEN pupils. Neither Gabby nor Sally had specialist SEN experience and there was no dedicated SEN coordinator for alternative provision pupils as there would be in a mainstream school. It was noted that there were six SEN students in the current alternative provision cohort. Some schools involved their SEN coordinator with alternative provision pupils, however this varied from school to school.
- Members noted that a number of pupils in alternative provision had multiple needs and vulnerabilities and several agencies were working with their families. It was explained that the service relied on other agencies and services to provide relevant information on pupils to support their work, however this was not always forthcoming. Whilst the service had a good relationship with early help services, it was commented that engagement with other services varied. The service had a positive working relationship with all schools in the borough.
- A member advised of a previous negative experience of an alternative provision provider, noting that the provider had low aspirations for pupils, did not challenge negative behaviour and did not engage with parents. Officers indicated that they would look into this further; however it was thought that the member was referring to

a provider which the council had since stopped using following similar concerns being shared by schools and the council.

- Officers confirmed that the service engaged with parents and pupils throughout the referral process. The service recommended that pupils visited two to four providers with their parents before completing a referral, as they would with a new school. It was suggested that pupils that did this tended to integrate better.
- A discussion was had on the quality of providers. The service emphasised to providers that academic standards were crucial and had previously set targets for providers, stating that the council would cease to place pupils with a provider unless improvements were made.
- It was explained that each provider was visited at least once a term or half-term, three to six times a year in total. The maximum interval between quality assurance visits was two years. Providers rated as good or outstanding were assessed once every two years, whereas others were assessed more frequently.
- A member queried the child experience of the alternative provision referral process and how the service worked with pupils who did not engage. In particular, it was queried how the service worked with pupils that had been referred to alternative provision and had visited providers, but had not found a provider that appealed to them. In response, it was advised that the service sought to be creative in such instances and could seek a bespoke provider. An example was given of a pupil wanting to study animal care, with a specific interest in reptiles. As this was not available through existing providers, alternative provision was sourced through Capel Manor College in Enfield.
- It was advised that if a pupil refused to engage with alternative provision altogether then this would be a matter for their school, as the school retained responsibility for the pupil's education. It was commented that such instances were very rare; officers could only recall three instances in recent years. Schools would alert the council's access and engagement team about pupils refusing to engage. Officers commented that it would be likely for other services to be involved with the family also, as those who refused to engage often had complex problems. Persistent non-engagement could lead to a pupil being excluded.
- A discussion was had on attendance. Officers advised that this was a known issue, with 50% of alternative provision pupils attending less than 80% of the time. However, there were sometimes complex factors which led to non-attendance. It was suggested that some pupils had significantly improved their attendance and this should be appreciated. An example was given of one pupil whose attendance increased from 20% to over 80% once the pupil moved to a more suitable provider and problems at home were resolved.
- Officers advised that one challenge of working with parents was reassuring them that their child's progress would continue to be monitored by the council and the school. Some parents were subject to professional intervention and needed additional support and reminders to attend key meetings. Officers commented that the service would like to have stronger relationships with parents; however this was not feasible within existing resources. Officers explained that parental engagement with the provider was more important than engagement with the council and suggested that parental engagement with providers could be improved by holding more celebratory events, to provide more positive reasons for engagement.

- Officers commented that not all providers employed qualified teachers and sometimes providers struggled to set expectations for pupils and manage behaviour. The service did not agree with the practices of some providers; it was explained that many providers required pupils to sit initial tests on entry to gauge their competencies in English and Maths and the testing methods of some providers were not as robust as others. The service was working with providers to improve their assessment of pupils.
- Some providers had previously commented that they did not receive sufficient information on pupils when they were referred to alternative provision. This had been rectified and pupil information was now provided from teachers, the head of year, and head teacher. Providers were supplied with pupils' key stage 2 and 3 levels which would help them to gauge the abilities of pupils, however it was not always possible to use this data, as if a pupil had a history of poor attendance then their attainment level was likely to have decreased.
- It was suggested that some providers could have a disproportionate focus on behaviour as opposed to teaching and learning. It was thought that some pupils could benefit from a greater academic challenge.
- It was noted that providers rated as inadequate were given one term to make progress; otherwise the council would cease to place pupils with the provider.
- Members noted that the council delivered training to providers in addition to the payment the provider received for admitting pupils.
- A discussion was had on how to reduce the number of pupils in alternative provision and if the council should challenge schools more on referrals. Officers commented that the council had to be careful in challenging schools, as schools were ultimately responsible for the child's education and if the council refused to accept a referral then a school could choose to make their own arrangements with a provider or exclude the pupil, both of which were likely to lead to poor outcomes for the pupil.
- Officers commented that the quality of referral paperwork received from schools varied, with some providing more detailed referrals than others.
- It was suggested that some referrals could be deterred if the council adopted a more rigorous referral process, with a formal panel decision and appeals process, similar to how exclusions are processed. Requiring schools to present a robust case supported by evidence could assist in reducing the number of referrals.
- Members queried if officers considered local schools to be sufficiently engaged in the education of pupils on alternative provision. It was advised that all schools were keen to receive information and had access to the quality assurance and registration systems; however some schools made greater use of these systems than others. It was commented that some schools did not attend child protection meetings for children on alternative provision, however it was appreciated that schools had resource issues and such meetings could potentially disrupt a whole day of teaching.
- The service had sought to increase engagement with social care and requested that social workers worked with the service as they would with a school, however this did not happen on all occasions. It was commented that social care had a particularly high turnover of staff which made developing good working relationships more difficult. Officers had previously attended social care team meetings to raise awareness of the alternative provision service. The alternative provision service was provided with the details of social workers allocated to pupils.

- Members queried how officers would improve the service if greater resources were available. In response, it was advised that greater training would be offered to providers to raise standards and the service would request regular access to a CAMHS worker. Officers suggested that some pupils would benefit from counselling, particularly on bereavement issues. There were instances of pupils being absent for a month or two following the death of a parent or grandparent, especially if their grandparent was their main carer. It was commented that providers and the alternative provision service were not skilled in this area and access to a dedicated worker for one day a week would be beneficial.
- Members requested that a further scrutiny visit to providers be arranged. Members expressed an interest in interviewing staff, pupils and parents.

Those present thanked the officers for their cooperation and contribution to the scrutiny review.